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SUBJECT: PUBLIC AFFAIRS PERSPECTIVES IN THE WAKE OF THE
PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO EUROPE

1. Summary: French opinion leaders across the political spectrum commented at length on every stop of the President's trip to Europe. As with the visit of Secretary Rice, several, sometimes conflicting, themes emerged. Even long-standing critics of recent U.S. policy heralded the visit and President's remarks as a signal of transatlantic "reconciliation" and a "change in tone" by the United States. Not far behind, however, came questions about the "real" motives behind the change in tone and insistence that tonal changes cannot mask fundamentally different approaches to foreign policy challenges, even where goals are the same. Many commentators adopted a wait-and-see attitude, and reserved judgment on the extent of the narrowing of the trans-Atlantic divide, recalling Europe's unease with U.S. "messianic patriotism" (national center-right daily *Le Figaro*). Subsequent actions on both sides of the Atlantic, they opined, would determine whether U.S. foreign policy remained at its core unchanged, what path and institutions the U.S. would choose for engagement with Europe, and whether Europe would be prepared to assume a united, constructive - if not always the same - policy toward the U.S. and global objectives. While French opinion leaders remain divided, it is clear that the President and Secretary have generated new openness to U.S. views among France's elite. Our comment offers some thoughts on maintaining the positive momentum. End summary.

CHANGE OF TONE AND (LIMITED) RECONCILIATION

2. Headlines and articles trumpeted "reconciliation" and "de-icing" of relations (*Le Figaro*) with some commentators declaring the President's visit a success even before his arrival: "Condoleezza Rice's conciliatory tone in Paris two weeks ago established the theoretical framework for reconciliation. The President's trip this week will put it into practice" (Editorial in Catholic *La Croix*). "There has been a spectacular change in tone" and the President's "objective is no longer to go to war or the crusade against terrorism; it is to fight tyranny and spread democracy" (Editorial in *Le Figaro*). With Iraq behind us, "the scars left by the intervention . have been for the most part erased by the January 30 elections" (national center-left daily *Le Monde*), and the French media viewed the Presidential visit as symbolizing "blue skies" for the transatlantic relationship (Editorial in *La Croix*). Other commentaries saw the visit as important American recognition of the EU: "This is the first time, since the EU has existed, that an American president has dealt with it directly as a union. This is the acknowledgment of the international role that the EU plays." (Editorial in the regional daily *Midi Libre*).

3. This transatlantic "reunion" may have been "without bitterness" but it was also "without enthusiasm," with the EU worried about the President's "messianic messages and military doctrine" and desire "to pursue the dream of a universal American leadership" (*Liberation*). The media uniformly singled out transatlantic differences over Iran, the Chinese arms embargo and NATO's future as points of friction marking the "limits to reconciliation" (*Le Figaro*). Europe and the U.S. might share goals in Iran, Syria/Lebanon, and China, but commentators steadily contrasted the EU's preferences for multilateral diplomacy with U.S. preference for "the big stick of military might" (national center-left daily *Liberation*). Pascal Boniface of the IRIS (Institute for International and Strategic Relations) acknowledges that the U.S. has gone farther than Europe to effect reconciliation, but sees in the new U.S. tone a realization of practical limits to unilateralism. In his *Liberation* op-ed of 02/28, "The U.S. Softens Its Approach," Boniface calls President Bush's European trip "a veritable charm offensive which confirmed the previous messages sent by Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld. President Bush's intention was to bury the hatchet which Iraq had raised between Washington and the Europeans. Since January, and to the surprise of those who expected Europe to have to pay for its dissidence, there has been a series of gestures from the U.S. towards Europe. This proves that although the world is not a multipolar world, neither is it a unipolar one, because the Americans cannot face major international challenges by themselves. Neither can they

impose their strategic agenda. . While a Euro-American rapprochement has taken place, it is clear that the Americans have traveled a longer road than the Europeans. They have also become aware, more so even than the Europeans themselves, that Europe's power is growing. The U.S. has not become a multilateral nation abiding by international law. But it has gone from 'multilateral if we can, unilateral if we must' to 'unilateral if we can, multilateral if we must.' The U.S. is holding to the same policy, but with a larger dose of realism, less arrogance, and a smile on their face."

EUROPEAN SELF-ANALYSIS AND THE FUTURE OF EU-US COOPERATION

14. Analytical pieces appearing at the end of the Brussels trip raised the question of how Europeans can best respond to America's overtures, but they gave no answers. "Bush has discovered that Europe exists. Following his re-election, George Bush recognized that it was urgent to re-establish a healthy trans-Atlantic relationship. But does he really need Europe? Despite what he has been saying repeatedly, it is not so certain." (Le Figaro). Others think the U.S. hopes to "coddle" Europe in the hopes that Europe will fall into line with U.S. positions. "George Bush did not come to Europe to negotiate with his allies, he came to convince and convince them some more of the righteousness of his crusade for freedom." (Regional daily Le Journal de la Marne)

Some commentators noted the allies "are talking past each other" (Le Figaro) as illustrated by the Bush-Chirac dinner when President Bush "insisted on bringing up democracy in the Greater Middle East. and President Chirac chose the issue of climate change" as their personal priorities (Le Figaro).

Guy Sorman, (Le Figaro), provides an introspective look at what might be on the horizon for the U.S. and Europe in an op-ed entitled, "What If Bush Were Right?" Sorman, who has made similar arguments in the past, marshals evidence of accelerating reforms in the Middle East to question the absence of any European vision for democracy in that region. "The fact that peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians may be possible re-enforces President Bush's analysis. The elections in Afghanistan are also a feather in his cap. In Egypt, candidates are running against Mubarak. The initial intention of redesigning the Middle East map as a preamble to peace may have looked unrealistic at the time, but seems to be on the road to appearing achievable. The Europeans were too skeptical and underestimated their (the Arab world's) desire for freedom. For the U.S., the success of the Iraqi elections means that they will continue to export democracy with whatever means possible. Bush and the neo-cons may give the impression of hesitating between diplomacy and war. But their hesitation will be short-lived. Unless the Europeans can achieve a warming in Iran and elsewhere. the U.S. government will pursue its democratization process."

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT: NATO'S ROLE

14. Gerard Dupuy in left-of-center Liberation on February 22 asserted that: "NATO today seems about as useful as a bicycle to a fish. but that it is a topic of discussion to be avoided in order to agree for the sake of agreeing." However, as Le Figaro reported on February 23, NATO's role and future provided another area of friction. "If anyone in Europe had doubts concerning NATO's raison d'etre 15 years after the end of the Cold War, President Bush gave them an answer Tuesday: 'NATO is the most successful Alliance in the history of the world,' he said twice. It is 'the' vital security relationship for the U.S. ... Seeing through the maneuver, Jacques Chirac only repeated the European mantra of reviewing the situation, 'It is necessary for us, as the German Chancellor has said, to continue to measure changes occurring on the European Continent.' This direct reference to the European defense project elicits ambiguous reactions from the other side of the Atlantic."

CAPITALIZING ON THE POSITIVE

15. Comment: There is genuine French satisfaction with the President's visit to Europe and the gesture of outreach to European leaders and publics. While the French media remain alert to our policy differences and seem eager to highlight them, their voices have become less shrill. Given the extremes of anti-Administration rhetoric we have witnessed, even in the cases of lukewarm receptivity, a positive step forward has been acknowledged. The change in tone was a necessary - and successful - first step in any reconciliation.

To address the wait-and-see critics and build on the success of the Secretary's and President's trips, we propose the

following public affairs considerations for the upcoming months:

¶A. Sustain the positive momentum of public dialogue through frequent travel of senior officials, to include a public event during their visit. We highlight the success of the Secretary's and the President's public addresses. These

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events have a doubly positive effect in that the event itself provides the image of trans-Atlantic dialogue and the media covers these events widely. The combination generally has a more powerful effect than a media encounter alone.

¶B. Include senior staff briefings for foreign media beyond the traveling press. Briefings provide further opportunity to amplify – and clarify when necessary -- the principal's message and help combat journalists' personal spin, which is frequent in the French media. Moreover, the encounter itself is a further "proof" of our interest in dialogue.

¶C. Repeat and elaborate the themes in the President's speech that had positive resonance with French opinion leaders:

¶1. The media noted with satisfaction that the President spent many minutes of his speech on the resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, answering a long-standing European complaint that the President had not given sufficient priority to the conflict which was the basis for other problems in the region (and with Muslims around the world).

¶2. Many commentaries focused on Europe's difficulties in finding fault with the President's message of democracy. The President emphasized again that the values of human rights and freedom were not an American exclusivity; rather it was Europe which was at the foundation of these principles.

¶3. While action and optimism should drive us, the President's acknowledgement of the long and difficult process in the development of democracy reinforced the image of an Administration that has thought through its policies, answering earlier critics of Iraq and Broader Middle East policy.

¶4. The U.S. finds a strong, united Europe in its interest and is ready to work with Europe as a partner. NATO, an organization of consensus among members, will remain the central institution for the trans-Atlantic security relationship, answering conflicting criticism in Europe that the U.S. no longer cares about NATO and Europe, that the U.S. directs NATO to its own aims, and that, for the U.S., "the mission will determine the coalition: is the U.S. preferred approach to security.

¶5. The President values cooperative efforts with Europe, and gave examples of such ongoing coordination, including in the area of development and the environment, addressing the image of an unhearing, powerful America which alone claims to know the way.

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